THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Mass Media and the Boko Haram Domestic Terror Attacks in Northern Nigeria: An Overview

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Abstract:
The study examines Terrorism and The Mass Media : An Overview Of Boko Haram Domestic Terror Attacks In The Northern Part Of Nigeria. The paper academically sieve through the concept of Terrorism and adjudged it to be a cankerworm that needs to be fought with every counterterrorism machineries. It is also of the opinion that the major instrument of terrorism is media propaganda and that any terrorist action without the media is of no effect. No wonder why Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism expert wittingly stated that terrorism and the Media " are bound together in an inherently symbiotic relationship and that each feeding off and exploiting on another". The skepticism regarding the media-objectivity subjected them to a serious condemnation and absurd criticism from scholars within and without. The study found that poverty, deprivation, inequality, and corruption are the primary cause of Boko Haram domestic attacks in contrary to religion and political factors as submitted by numerous concerned scholars like Forrest (2012 : 13), Ogundiya and JimohAmzat (2008), Obioma (2013) and others. The paper utilizes secondary source in its methodology and exploring The Agenda- Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Media Theory in its theoretical perspectives. The study concludes that terrorism once alien to Nigeria is now a reality, incidents of insecurity and threat factors have assumed a monstrous dimension negatively impacting on the livelihood of the people. The media as "The Oxygen Of Publicity" for the terrorists should step up objectivity in their writings and adequately key in to counterterrorism practices. The collective efforts of government and the media would go a long way in reducing if not absolutely obliterated terrorism act from our society. The paper ,therefore, recommends good government that is capable of edging out poverty levels and bridge the wide gap of standard of living between the rich and the poor. It advocates for objectivity in the media reportage of events and stricter monitoring on the Nation's cyberspace infrastructure.

1. Methodology
The study uses secondary sources in its data collection. The data are sourced from Newspapers , Magazines , Libraries , archives , and other desk study.

2. Theoretical Framework
This study is based on two theoretical frameworks – The Agenda – Setting Theory and The Social Responsibility Media Theory. The Agenda- Setting Theory was propounded in 1973 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald ,L. shaw. The theory explains that people exposure to news is limited especially public issues because they do not pay attention to all news outlets, thus,they rely on those that the media present to them. According to Anaeto el ta (1988) "News is filtered , chosen and shaped by newsroom staff or broadcasters", that is, the media as gatekeepers of information pre-determine what people talk about. By implication, the media are stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about and also set the agenda of discussion by virtue of what it infers as significant. Iyengar (1990) avers that people generally rest on more accessible sources for information otherwise rely solely on the media for information on issues they knew little or nothing *about*. The theory is also good at explaining why people exposed to the same media that tend to attach importance to similar issues. Another assumption of this theory states that since people are cognitive misers, implying that they like finding a middle way to knowledge, they would inevitably turn to the media as the most accessible channel of information to improve their cognitive skills. Iyenger (1990) opines that the frequency of reportage can influence what people tag as laudable ;
"So if the news media decides to show a certain topic more than often than another, it shapes the agenda and shapes what people remember and call back to at a later time"

The Social Responsibility Media Theory propounders are Siebert,S.F., Peterson, T.B and Schramm, W . It was propounded in 1963. The theory assumes that the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society through professional standard of informativeness , truth, objectivity, accuracy and balance. It says that the media should strive to regulate itself within the framework of law and that they should eschew from whatever that can lead to violence , crime , civil disorder or offence to minority groups. In a nutshell, the theory principle is based on the fact that the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media and their timely intervention on issues like that of the book Haram domestic terror attacks must be justified to secure public good and interest. The theory, however, owes its origin to the Hutchins Commission on freedom of the press set up in the United States Of America in 1947. The commission was charged to re-examine the concept of press freedom as enunciated   in the libertarian or free press theory. Thus , under the theory freedom of expression is guarantee on the duty of individual to his thought and to his conscience. It is seen as moral right that has value for both the individual and the society at large. There fore , the theory is of the opinion that media practitioners are obligated to present or publish all significant viewpoints of the citizenry and determine which ones deserves a hearing.

3. Terrorism : Searching for Definition
The concept of terrorism is described in different perspectives by different scholars mainly because the term is symbolic to emotional interpretations. While some see it as being devilish, some argue that they are freedom fighters. Generally, several scholars point to the fact that the use of fear constitute significantly to the interpretation of terrorism. Alao and Uwom (2012) cited

Hoffman (1998) defined terrorism as :
"The deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence in the pursuit of political change"

O'Neal (2003) alluded with this point when when he quoted Hoffman (1996) as saying ;
"Terrorism is a particularly difficult threat to asses because it often comprised amorphous associations of highly mobile individual whose intentions are virtually impossible to gauge"

Musa (2012) submitted that terrorists employ fear as a means to foment unrest among the people;
"The spread of public terror , fear and feeling of chaos depends largely on the images and messages being carried by media reports about the terrorists threat and acts. The omnipresence of mass media at global level frequently multiplies these effects out of proportion"

In a nutshell, terrorism is a global phenomenon that security professionals, scholars , diplomats and policy makers have found so difficult to give it an appropriate definition because of the changes in its phases . There is no universal or consistence definition because terrorism is a pejorative term. It took centuries of debate and superior argument for the United Nations to come up with atleast an acceptable definition of terrorism.

4. The Origin of Terrorism
According to Hoffman (1998), the first century Jews were the first people to use the word "Terrorism" in an effort to end Roman rulership over the Palestine Jews . The group that was addressed as Sicaril adopted violence as a mode of operation in order to instill fear in their targeted audience.
Aside from this group , another group that adopted the word to achieve political goal are the "Hashshashiiv, a Muslim group of Shittes that did not recognize Sunni caliphate in Syria. Meanwhile the Jacobians in France revolution are the first set of people to be named as terrorists. They ran the government of terror to eliminate virtually all the counter revolutionaries who they thought to be the enemies of the people . Not too long, the new French government revolutionary tribunal sentenced thousand of people to death by the "gullotine' because they opposed the new government policies. Edmond Burke a vocal English critic of the regime described the revolution proponents as terrorists (Kushner,2012).
Moreover, most revolution groups adopted violence means in their struggle against the colonialists during this period, it was famous and honourable to identify with freedom fighters that saw it as an act of gaining freedom from the iron grip of their oppressors. Yasser Arafat, president of PLO asserted that ;

"People who struggle to liberate themselves from foreign oppressions and exploitations have the right to use all methods at their disposal, including force".(Hoffman, 1996).

5. Evolution of Terrorism in Nigeria
Domestic terrorism that is characterized by brutal force and violence to suppress civil unrest and resistance to state policies, according to Oyeniyi (2007) dated back to pre-independence Nigeria . He asserts ;
"Dragged dawn by the need for legitimacy and acceptability, colonial rule in Nigeria dependent on the use of force and the deployment of terror to enforce its policies , laws and orders. The Oke-Ogun uprising of 1921 demonstrated this aptly."

Also, the Nigerian post independence era experienced gamut of political motivated violence agitations which shattered the then socio-political stability of Nigeria. Abimbola and Adesote (2012) claims that " these violence agitations" had dimensions of "terror capable of disintegrating the country". Citing Madunagu (2005) Ogundiya and Amzat (2008) argues that the September 26, 1992 crash of Nigerian air force plane in Lagos points to politically motivated intral state terrorism. They are of the opinion

that the first recorded country's involvement in state sponsored terrorism was the 1984 failed attempted repatriation move of Umaru Dikko from London during the Buhari/Idiagbon Regime.

In 1995, the hijack of the Nigeria's air bus plane with registration number RG No 5NAUH from the Muritala Mohammed International airport, Lagos enroute Abuja with 146 passengers on board and its diversion to Niamey, the capital of Niger Republic by a team headed by Jerry Yussuf, belonging to a group which identified itself as the movement of Democracy (MAD). The gruesome killing of Dele Giwa , the chief executive of Newswatch Magazine in 1986 via a letter bomb is another terrorism incidence in Nigeria . The spate of indiscriminate bomb blasts between 1994 and 1997 after the annulment of June 12 presidential elections results through which many important personalities were assassinated.

The Bakassi Boys group in the South East was initially more of political thugs for some big time politicians and later metamorphosed into militant group. This group eventually became willing weapon for terrorists group like the Boko Haram. In other words, the callous assassination of the former Attorney General and Minister of justice , Chief Bola Ige on the 23rd December, 2001 is another terrible case of terrorism in Nigeria. A number of politically motivated terror attacks and killing in 2002 are signs of terrorist threat in Nigeria and so are the recent emergence of Boko Haram and its spate of killing and bombing in the northern part of Nigeria such as maiduguiri, Kano, Bauchi, Abuja , Kaduna , Gombe , Jos and others. Kingsley (2010) citing Juergensmeyer (2008:23) opines ;

"Most people feels that religion should provide tranquility and peace, not terror , yet, in many of these cases, religion has supplied not only the ideology, but also the motivation and organization structure for the perpetration of terror in the world".

He contends that religious motivated violence could in principle lead to absolutism and consequent violence or abuse of it . Forrest (2012) argues that a marmot   of factors form a compelling ideology upon which contemporary terrorist group make their claim for attacks- religious, political and socio-economic grievances, organizational attribute and individual *"characteristics"*. Nigeria had a thick combination of the mentioned variables with a deep flair for a religion which is a strong motivator for all kinds of human actions . No wonder, John Mark, a psychologist states ;

"That it is because religion deals with the spiritual or ultimate human concerns such as life or death, our highest values and selves, the roots of evil, the existence of God " (Forrest, 2012:13)

6.. Boko Haram Domestic Terror Attacks in the Northern Nigeria

Terrorism in the Northern Nigeria dated back to 1980 with emergence of the deceased Malam Mohammed Marwa also known as Alla- ta –Tsine or "Maitasine" . He and his terrifying group held kano hostage for several months. During this period over 4, 177 Northerners lost their lives and crisis target, "Maitatshine crisis". The group frowned at modernization and western influence , oppose those reading western books aside from the Quran as "candidate for hell".

Another Islamic group sprang up after two decades later officially known as "JamaatuAhhusSunnaLid DalaWatis Jihad or Boko Haram. This blood thirsty group like the latter maintained the same uncompromising stance against westernization and education. Boko haram is a combination of the Hausa words, Boko means" western" and Harm Means "Sins" or *"Forbiden"* (www.nigeriannews.com.ng). In 2009, Boko Haram launched the first terrifying, violence attacks following the security operatives killing of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf.

Adibe (2012) cited by Alozieuwa (2012) are of the contrary opinions in the popular belief that Yusuf Mohammed established the group in 2002 in Maiduguiri. Alozieuwa alluded with the view that the group was originally set up by MalamLawal in 1995 under the name Shahaab(Madike ,2011 cited in Adibe 2012: 39-50) before he travelled to Medina , Saudi Arabia for further studies.

The termination of Yusuf life propelled the group to open up clandestine attacks of terror in retaliation for the killing of their respectable leader, Yusuf. Since then, no fewer than 2,800 lives were lost since 2009. However, the group target areas cut across Northern state, including federal Capital territory. Amongst these unprecedented terror attacks, was the bomb blast of the United Nation (UN) headquarters on August 20, 2011 which left nine dead and twenty injured. Also, the police headquarters ,This Days ,Moment and The Sun newspapers all situated in Abuja got burnt down through bombing on April 26, 2012. (www.punchonline.com).

Moreover, the bomb attacks of three churches in Kaduna by the group members led to the Kaduna State government to declare a 24hours curfew on June 19, 2012. (The Punch, June 21,2012). The group also laid claim for a twin bombing of the armed forces command and staff college ,Jaji, Kaduna, which led to the collapse of a church building claiming many lives.The group in retaliatory actions in September, 2012 attacked Telecommunication base stations in Bono, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano states warning the government through E-mail sent to Premium Times(September, 2012) which reads thus;

" We will continue with our attacks on them until they stop". (www.premiumtimesng.com).

This year on January 19, 2013, unidentified blood thirsty gun men later discovered to be members of the sect launched brutal attacks on the Emir of Kano , Alhaji Ado Bayero convoy, murdered four palace guards, two soldiers , injured the monarch and his son. More recently, on December 3, 2013, the group despiratedly launched another bomb attacks on a military information in the month justifying the group unabated belief as quoted by Adele (2011:65) as saying;

" We are warriors carrying out a jihad in Nigeria and our struggle is based on the tradition of the holy Prophet"

7. Challenges in Tackling the Sect Threat

The challenges confronted in dealing with the terror attacks and the threat of Boko Haram include the following;

- Difficulty in identifying members of the group. The dress and appear like normal people, which makes them tough to be noticed, whereas they can identify their targets.

- Linkage of the group with foreign terrorist network, e.g. Al- Qauda.
- Lack of effective technical equipment for tracking down movement of members of the group.
- Involvement of political sponsors and sympathisers.
- Informants of Boko Haram among the security operatives or agencies.
- The advent of ICT (internet) where they download information on how to prepare or assemble improvised explosive device (IEDS).
- The strategic location of Maiduguri, their headquarters being a gateway to three neighbouring countries, namely; Chad, Cameroon, and Niger Republics coupled with the porous nature of Nigeria boarders.(Speech delivered by Air Vice Marshal Danbaba and published in The African Journal Of Counter Terrorism, Vol. 2, No 2, December,2012).

8. Government Measures to Curtail the BokoHaram's Scourge
In an effort to curtail the menace of Boko Haram terror attacks, the federal government put the following in place ;
- Enactment of anti-terrorism law by the national assembly in 2011.
- Setting up a joint task force to curtail the fire power of the group.
- Bilateral agreement on terrorism of recent by the federal government with her neighbouring countries – Cameroon, Niger and Chad.
- Closure of boarders in order to checkmate the Boko Haram influx into the country.
- Discussions with the stakeholders such as traditional rulers, opinion and religion leaders , politicians, village heads and others.
- Introduction of massive training of various security personnel of the federal government to update them on strategies to be adopted to combat the spate.

9. Mass Media and the Boko Haram Domestic Terror Attacks
The role of the media is significant in counter terrorism strategy and there is no doubt in the fact that the major instrument of terrorism is media propaganda. So, any terrorist action without the media is of no effect on the targeted audience. In fact, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Magaret Thatcher in her metaphoric expression described media as " the oxygen of publicity on which terrorist depends "(Wikinson, 1997).
OludareOgunlana , a security expert argued in his opening speech at the second symposium on combating terrorism in Africa held in Accra on 31 March,2012 that;
" Restricting the freedom of the press would not reduce its ability to be used by the terrorist organization and the trade off of freedom for lives is not a solution because the terrorist will further use it as blackmail against the liberal democracies"

The Media have always been condemned for making the job of the terrorist to be too easy because of the coverage and the emotion that arouse from the public . Biernatzki (2002) concurred with this view quoting Kratcoski (2001:468) as states ;
" If one of the elements of terrorism is the wish to obtain publicity for a couse and create propaganda , the media have overreacted in responding to this desire".

Neuwirth (2006) asserted that a major segment of the global media is encouraging terrorism by "supplying or providing a propaganda bonanza for the terrorist cause….. without the gain, there would be less incentive for the horrific behaviour ".
A number of challenges are presented to media practitioners whose primary responsibility is to ensure objectivity in information dissemination. Ngoa (2012) avers that objectivity is compromised because of the power play in Nigeria media ownership." Objectivity" he arguments have not only become " *antiquated but when and where the media strives to perform quite often , it does so with some undertones that connotes the master voice*".

Musa (2012) submits that the media's role in reporting terrorism is crucial since terrorists now seeks ways of exploiting media reports or images to sway public opinion in their favour .
Emma –Iyamu (2012) opines that the fact Boko Haram group has transformed into *" a publicity nightmare*" may not be unconnected with the media's role in giving them "the appropriate positive share of voice through high numbers of mention in target media"
To buttress OludareOgunlana 31 March, 2012 speech restricting the freedom of the press will definitely be meaningless in the present area of media age where the terrorist has discovered media as an important weapon in the sustenance of their struggle .
Today, the terrorist groups have access to the internet, affordable video production, duplication process and private terrorist owned television stations. For instance, Osama Bin Ladin before his death maximally used the new media by sending his messages via internet and YouTube . Also, Malam Ibrahim Shekau, the Boko Haram leader in Nigeria has been incessantly using YouTube to send information to the government and members.
Terrorist organizations also adopted a system called*"Global Dialecties*" that is defined by Bruce Hoffman as " *a situation in which awakening, awareness, and activism and radicalism can be stimulated at the local level and then mobilized into a wider process of dissent and protest*". For instance, Farouk Mutallab, a Nigeria bomber who attempted to bomb a plane on December 25, 2009 made his first contact on the internet with the Al-Quada terrorist group operating from Yemen using Islamic religion as tool of perpetrating their dastard act s.

According to Bilgen (2012) in his book entitled *" Terrorism And The Media : A Dangerous Symbiosis "* states that history and time have given evidence of the beneficial relationship between terrorist organisations and the media. He argues that the media unequivocally serves the terrorist   interest by showing the shocking images and trying to rationalize their cause. He, however, concluded that the media passions and obsession of sensationalism may serve the terrorist cause to *" create an atmosphere or politics of fear and create ripe conditions for propaganda and recruitment follow any terrorist attack"*.Atheide(2009) alluded to this opinion by arguing that *" this politics of fear"* is an absolute dominant motive for news and news reporting about terrorism is connected with "victimization" reports that boost the bitter experience of crime , danger and fear in our society today.

Moreover, Ngoa (2012) frowns at the inadequacies in the media reportage of terrorism . He says *" Truth , accuracy and context have become secondary, just as the public right to know is also now secondary*. He further explain the implication of this weakness in media reporting in that it helps the group to manipulate the minds of the people to gain sympathy.

In other words, in order for the media to be relieved of public criticism and condemnation, they should endeavor to report the situation moderately and there should be news balancing coupled with some levels of control base on "Media Ethics" and "Sense of professionalism". No wonder, Crossman (www..cjc-online. Ca) agreed as cited in Josephine Akarue (2013) that ;

" The job of the press is not to worry about the consequences of its coverage , but to tell the truth... as much as those us in the press would like to be popular and loved, i8t is more important that we are accurate and fair... and let the chips fall where they may".

10. Discussion of Findings

Apart from the popular interlocking factors – socio- economic , political , religious, tribal and socio- cultural discrepancies as advocated by different scholars, this study found that the root cause of Boko Haram Terror attacks in the northern part of Nigeria, are poverty, deprivation, inequality and corruption perpetuated on the governed by the governors. These factors are also typified in the militancy struggle of the Niger Delta Movement For The Survival Of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement For The Emacipation Of The Niger Delta (MEND), The Egbesu Boys amongst others.

Alao and Uwom (2012) associates with this fact that wide gap inequalities , high unemployment rate , poverty and others makes more susceptible for the emergence of terror attacks in those parts of the country. They asserts ;

" with its multi-faceted problems of mass unemployment, illiteracy, poor health, low infrastructure and poverty, Nigeria's inability to secure her citizens has become more glaring than ever ".

The study found that victims of this scheme eventually utilized terrorism as a tool of vengeance against the perceived injustice against them.Furthermore , the persistent corruption practices and bad governance that widen the gap between the rich and the poor serves as indicators to the group that the state has failed them. Coincidentally, the failed state index data of 2010- 2011 ranked Nigeria 14th and 15th in the terrorism and the political mapping and Human Development Index Trend (20110 where Nigeria emerged 156 out of 186 countries respectively is a clear evidence of Nation's insecurity (Akarue .J. ,2013, unpublished work). Herskovits (2012) as cited in Alozieuwa (2012) pitch tent with this position and opines that poverty was a dominant when the insurgency began in 2009, he posit ;

"The root cause of violence and anger in both the north and south of Nigeria is endemic poverty and hopelessness".

He of the opinion that alleviation or total eradication of poverty, deprivation, inequality and corruption is most significant and severe in the northern part of Nigeria to achieve real peace. Also Shettima (2012) concurs with this contention when he postulated that the emergence of domestic terrorism in the Northern Nigeria is due to many years of neglect and structural misappropriation on the people by successive ruling cabal. He posits thus;

"The retreating state, dwindling economic resources, visionless ruling class steeped in conspicuous consumption in the midst of abundance poverty created a fertile environment for the Boko Haram to thrive ".

The study also found that in combating book Haram domestic terrorism, the media are inevitable and so media censorship should not be the best option on the side of the government as campaigned by some scholars . Belgen (2012) believes that the media undoubtedly serve the terrorist interest by repeating the shocking images and frame it from a sensational seeking angles. Wilkinson (1997) reasons that Magaret Thatcher position that as long as the mass media exist, terrorists will hunger for the " publicity Oxygen". Usman(2013) states that ;

"The media are not only concerned about physical violence , they also manipulate the minds of people through propaganda and they have a lot of sympathisers – misguided people I might say ".

All these are not enough proof to propel government to censor the media from the domestic terror attacks coverage, but shows the ties or symbiotic relationship between the mass media and the terrorists. On the other hands, the study is about the idea that the traditional media operators must show cause the kind of news , images and stories that can promote the objectives of the terrorists and the ones that enhances the counter terrorism actions..

Internet is as well found to be the tool in the hands of the terrorists in order to extend the horizon of their theatre of operations.This gives them the advantage to jump the traditional media gatekeepers through the utilization of cyberspace infrastructure.They use this tenet of the media to disseminate their local messages to a wider audience across the globe unedited and undiluted . The question now is , how can this information avenue be gaged or monitor? This is an inkling for further studies.

11. Conclusion and Recommendation

Terrorism today assumed a serious global phenomenon that fans its amber of sorrow , pains, death, and fear throughout the nooks and crannies of the nations of the world . Pathetically ,it has moved its gory head to Africa, where countries like Nigeria , Egypt, Kenya and others have experienced and still experiencing its dastard acts . Historically, before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the world trade center and the pentagon called for global attention to issues relating to terrorism, subtler forms of terrorism had already taken root in Nigeria . Incidentally, Terrorism as an emerging trend in Nigeria present a number of challenges to media practitioners whose primary responsibility is to ensure objectivity and accuracy in news dissemination. Unfortunately, objectivity is a feature Scholars like Ngoa (2012) as cited in Akarue. J., 2013, an unpublished work) insists has become compromised because of the power play in Nigeria's media ownership. This singular conception against the media has put the profession under critical condemnation and criticism.

The study , therefore, recommends good governance saddled by purposeful leadership that is capable of edging out poverty and bridge the wide –gap between the rich and the poor. It calls for equity in resource sharing and total fight against corruption. Also, it advocates for objectivity in the media reportage of events and stricter monitoring of our nation cyberspace infrastructure.

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